STRATHARDLE

ITS HISTORY AND ITS PEOPLE

by A. G. REID

STRATHARDLE

Its History
&
Its People

Facts, History, Legends

together with
Personal Reminiscences
by
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of Balnakilly

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PREFACE

I make no claims to be a writer, and would never have attempted to do this had I been able to persuade someone more competent to do it.

Nor am I a historian. In fact as a schoolboy I could raise little enthusiasm for events of the past, all of which seemed to have one thing in common; they all happened a long time ago, before I was even born, and were not therefore any real concern of mine.

Now, half a century later, and looking backwards, time takes on an entirely different perspective, and childhood memories, still very clear in one's mind, seem to be recent events. So it becomes a simpler matter to project one's mind back further still to the amazing realization that many of the most famous events in our history took place only three life times ago, when the Glen was cut off from the rest of the world without any of the forms of communication which we now regard as essential.

It has therefore taken me most of my life to appreciate the fact that history is not just the dreary list of dates, kings and battles, that it is so often depicted as being, but is really all about ourselves, our families, how we think and feel, react and behave. It is about our homes, and how they as well as other things just happen to be the way they are. It is, of course, about our ancestors and predecessors, whose hard work, courage and beliefs have made this Glen what it is to-day.

Perhaps, above all, even though it does not provide an explanation, it certainly poses the question of how a nation of only about one million people, living a tough existence, regarded by many as barbarians, somehow made an impact on the world, totally out of all proportion to its size, and how it has given the world almost every technological, mechanical, medical and electronic invention from the earliest time right up to at least the middle of the 20th century. I recently felt obliged to explain to an American gentleman, that virtually every invention of any consequence had been made by a Scotsman, certainly up until the 1950's. He was somewhat aggrieved, more so, perhaps, because it was patently true, but he took some comfort from my agreement that in most cases the development and marketing of these had all too often been carried out in other countries such as his own. The true genius of someone like John Logie Baird is only just now coming to light, with many of his inventions still on the secret list!

The usual way out of this slightly embarrassing situation is to describe all such people as "British", as most of the world has been led to believe that Scotland is really only a small underdeveloped part of England, and that any slight racial differences that may have existed between us were happily ironed out in the 18th century when we became "Part of England"! The idea that a Scotsman is not actually English is still considered slightly quaint and rather amusing by many southerners.

It is, perhaps, easier to explain why the Highland Regiments still command such respect and even fear all over the world, and why they are invariably called on when the going gets really tough. Other armies may be bigger, and shout much more, but they do not have the traditions, the discipline, experience or leadership to match the highlanders.

An explanation is seldom sought for the reason that we have retained our own legal system based on Roman Law, as this fact is hardly even appreciated outside Scotland, and one frequently hears talk of "British Law" even by those elected to govern us! The fact that Scottish law is not only superior, but also far simpler, is gradually catching on, and certain aspects of English civil law are slowly coming into line with ours.

Perhaps the real explanation of all this lies in the hard way of life, where survival depended on hard work, where the community was all important, inter-dependence the normal accepted standard, and leadership and teaching were based on example. Ingenuity in all its forms was vital to make such a life possible and unity and discipline gave every effort its maximum advantage. No time or effort was wasted on forms, formalities or restrictions, and inspectors, investigators and other forms of outside interference would never have been entertained for a moment even if they had been invented.

Perhaps the following pages will help to give an insight into this, as well as, possibly, a new respect and understanding of this amazing race of people. I hope it will help the visitor to understand our culture and traditions as well as helping resident Scots the better to appreciate this wonderful Glen where my ancestors lived for so many centuries and where I have spent virtually my entire life.

It had been my intention to write this factually, eliminating as far as possible any mention of myself or immediate family, but a recent draft in which I had included certain personal reminiscences, was read by a friend who is a television drama producer. She it was who persuaded me to expand this aspect of the story, and, therefore, if the reader finds the autobiographical element excessive, the blame must lie with Ruth! I can only hope that this proves to be of interest, as well as being informative.

STRATHARDLE HISTORY

CHAPTER 1 — EARLY HISTORY

Some 20,000-30,000 years ago, the whole of Strathardle was buried under ice 3,000 feet deep, thereby covering the highest mountain peaks. As the climate got warmer, the ice melted, and the glaciers carved out the glen into roughly its present shape. The discovery of a few primitive weapons has suggested the possibility of a human population some twelve to fourteen thousand years ago. Whether or not they existed then, they certainly disappeared during the mini-ice age which followed. When this finally came to an end, the glen was left as a chain of lochs, which was to remain until the year 1033.

The population dates back to B.C. 2000, or possibly even 3000, finding their way, probably by following the rivers. An interesting and colourful book exists called the 'Ancient History of Caledonia'. This describes how Daniel, Lazarus, David and McIntyre were all warned by the God of Bethel to flee the land prior to the seige of Troy, and take up residence in the promised land. After landing in Gaul, and then in Wales, they were told to move again, until finally they landed at where is now Dundee, described as "The Hill of God". During the ensuing generations, the name Daniel gradually became McDonald, Lazarus became Laurence and then McLaren but David and McIntyre remained unchanged. Jacob's pillow, which they brought with them eventually became the stone of Scone. The original manuscript was written on skins, in Latin, but was "destroyed during the process of translating it into Gaelic". Although a delightful account, in lovely Old Testament language, one cannot attach much credence to it, as it conflicts with too much that is known. However, it is highly probable that immigrants from North Africa and the Mediterranean areas did arrive and mix with the existing population, as the much rounder skulls, typical of those areas, have been found contrasting noticeably with the longer ones belonging to the more northerly inhabitants. This is not really as surprising as it may seem. A sea journey at that time was probably much simpler than an overland journey through the thickly wooded, unknown highland areas. Indeed, Ireland was much more readily accessible by sea from the west coast of Scotland, than the hundred mile trek over the mountains to the eastern highlands, a fact which explains much about our subsequent history.

Urus or Giant Ox, the modern Cow with owner on same scale for comparison of size

Skull of Urus or Giant Ox found in 18th century

These early residents lived originally in caves, but as the populations increased, Iron Age huts came into existence. These consisted originally of holes in the ground, with the earth piled up around the edges and roofed over with skins, with just a hole left for the smoke to escape. The remains of many of these huts can be clearly seen on Glenfernate, Pitcarmick and in Glen Derby. A sizeable settlement was discovered only recently, being clearly visible from an aerial photograph, on Tullochcurran. One such hut which was recently dug up dates back to B.C. 1500. Because of the expanses of water in the lower areas of the glen, all these settlements are to be found at 800-1000 feet levels, most of which is now heather covered. Many remains have been found on Dalrulzion moor, and one settlement of over 60 stone, daub and wattle huts with a diameter of about 30 feet, dates back to about 200 B.C. Indeed, it seems that the glen was quite heavily populated at that time, with a pleasant, warm climate, and an abundance of wild life consisting of elk, wolves, brown bears, wild boar and Urus, the giant ox which was 6 feet high. This last beast was even mentioned by Julius Caesar.

The first written record of the glen comes from what may seem at first sight an unlikely source; the historical records written by Tacitus and Ptolemy. The Romans had been in Scotland since 55 B.C., and it is claimed that Pontius Pilate was born in Fortingall, near Aberfeldy, the son of Caesar's geologist who was researching in the area.

Tacitus was the son-in-law of Agricola, the last of the Roman generals. By A.D. 80, the Roman army had reached the Tay and were permanently encamped there. The Highland areas were called


Middleton Muir
Kinloch
BLAIRGOWRIE
RATTRAY


RATTRAY
BLAIRGOWRIE
Muirton of Ardblair
Kinloch
Loch of Drumellie or Marlee Loch
River Tay

by the Romans, Caledonia, and Tacitus described the highlanders as 'Pictii' – the painted people. This refers to the war paint regularly used by them.

Tacitus describes in great detail the famous battle in A.D. 84 of 'Mons Grampius' between the Roman army, under the leadership of his father-in-law Julius Agricola, and the Kaledonioi, or the Pictii under Galdus (or Galgacus), who had gathered up a large force to rid the country of the Roman invaders.

Historians have debated for many years the location of this battle, but is it now almost universally agreed that it took place between Blairgowrie and Bridge of Cally. Indeed, Blairgowrie gets its name from this – 'Blair' meaning battlefield, and 'Gowrie' meaning hollow between the hills.

The battle lines were drawn, with the Roman army between Meikleour and their fort to the west at Delvine and the Highlanders between Mause and Forneth, to the north of Blairgowrie. The battle was an intense and bloody one. As the highlanders were driven back to the north, they turned and regrouped on each ridge and fought again. When the battle was finally over, the highlanders had gone back into the woods of Strathardle, and the Romans back to their original lines, never again to take on the highlanders, although they did remain in other parts of Scotland until the year 410.

The casualties were terrible, at least 10,000 Caledonians, and 5000 Romans. Some have even put the figure as high as 30,000. The whole area is marked with large numbers of Tumuli and sepulchral cairns. A number of Roman weapons were found in the area of Craig Roman and Upper Balcairn, between Mause and the Moss of Cochrage. *(Refer to map on pages 4 and 5)*

The Great Cairn of Mause lies intact, not far from the river, 81 feet wide, and four feet high. When this was dug up, it contained human bones and teeth, Roman spears and bronze Roman coins. It was in fact the grave of 340 Romans who were killed. At Craig Roman, where Aulus Atticus was burnt with 33 of his men, Roman urns and spears were found. It is quite extraordinary to think that the mighty Roman army, which had conquered nearly all Europe, and almost the whole of Britain, was finally halted in Strathardle by the highlanders, and forced to retreat!

During a recent visit to Rome, the writer learnt from one of the official guides, who was speaking on the subject, that the highlanders used a secret weapon in the shape of dogs, of the kind that are now known as 'Irish' Wolfhounds. These were trained to go for a man's throat, and the Romans, who would willingly take on any man were just not prepared to fight dogs. Whether to justify their failure, or prove their point, they took a wolfhound back to Rome where it was put in the Colosseum against a lion. After a long and bloody fight, the wolfhound killed the lion. One can well imagine the relief on the faces of Agricola and his centurions!

Recent research by a historian and hydrologist has brought to light certain extremely interesting facts:-

1. The Roman soldiers were not only greatly discouraged by the wolfhounds, but could not understand why they initially went for the centurions. The reason was simple and had nothing to do with mystic powers. The badge of rank was a wolf and this was emblazoned on their helmets. The dogs recognised this.
2. There is evidence to show that the Roman army were mostly drowned, and that this final battle was between Blairgowrie and Dunkeld on a farm called Laighwood. A trap was set involving diverting and damning up the burns in the area and luring the Roman army into this well known boggy area which acts like quicksand. Being a large hollow, the water was trapped there leaving no escape for the Roman soldiers. It is a historical fact that this is notorious as a quicksand type of bog, and that the bishop of Dunkeld's palace which was later built there disappeared completely into the ground which forms part of the 'Highland Fault'. The claim is that all the Roman equipment suffered a similar fate, and that all the evidence would be found there. This was not of course mentioned by Tacitus who was the official historian at the time, but being the son-in-law of Agricola, his account was written for Roman consumption and defence of his father-in-law rather than world wide news, so there must be some doubt as to the accuracy which would have been strongly biased in favour of Agricola.

The site in question is that of the bishops palace and has therefore brought about opposition to any digging in the area. This could surely prove the point one way or the other. Until that happens it must remain a strong theory. This could also account for Tacitus's mention of the sea.

CHAPTER II — THE PICTS

After the departure of the Romans from the area, there is no written record of any kind, so very little is really known about the Picts. Clearly they never acquired the art of any form of writing, and there is no record even of their language, although it seems probable that a Gaelic form of language might have come in with some of the immigrants. This would again indicate immigrants from the south and west, as well as from Scandinavia and Holland. We know that the climate was mild and pleasant in the first three or four centuries A.D., but beginning to get colder by the time the Romans left in 410.

There are, in the area, an exceptional number, of Druid Circles, cairns and standing stones. There are, in fact, far more than in any other part of Britain.

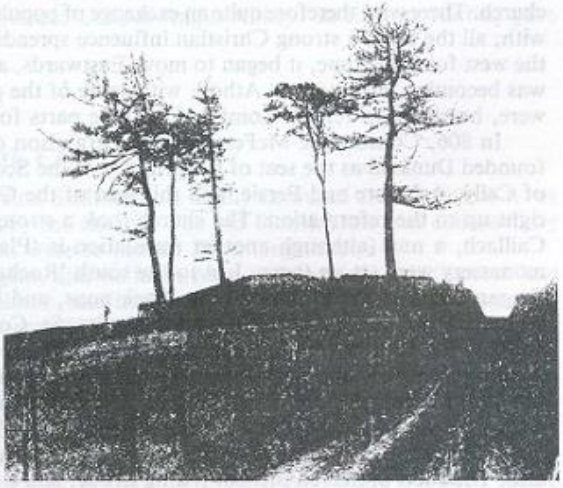
These Druid circles — 270 feet in circumference and 25 feet high, with many smaller cairns round about, were the scenes of Druid Festivals. They were generally built on tumuli, and therefore marked graves. The Druids obviously exerted enormous influence, as their customs and forms of worship were still being practised long after Christianity had taken over.

There are also a number of Clach Sleuchda — stones of worship and Crom-Leaca — standing stones about 5 feet-6 feet high. It is thought these were erected to perpetuate events, but sadly there is no record of the nature of them. One is to be seen near the road at Pitcarmick, and another just below Straloch, between the road and the river. There is also the "Saddle Stone" between Dalnacarn and Glenloch which was reputed to give fertility to barren women. There is also the rocking stone at Craigton. This stone weighs 3 tons, is 7 feet by 5 feet by 2½ feet thick and was clearly put there by man, and was used by the Druids for detecting guilt and is still in good working order.

However, there is evidence of the Picts being rather more advanced than one might at first suppose. There is, for instance, the palace or hunting box of the Pictish Kings 300 yards north west of the village of Aldclune, just beyond Killiecrankie. This had, amongst other things a 12 mile circuit to Blair Atholl which was used for chariot driving and racing. Obviously the Picts did learn something from the Romans. There is also a carved stone showing them fighting on horseback, which was otherwise unknown in the north of Europe. The district of Atholl, which extends from Dunkeld to Rannoch and well to the north, including Strathardle, is the earliest district of the highlands ever to be mentioned, and Blair Atholl has remained the focal point of history from early Pictish times right through to the 18th century and Dunkeld was of course the capital of Caledonia.

Throughout the first 1000 years A.D., the whole of this area experienced continuous raids and attacks by the Danes coming up the Tay. These were the cause of numerous battles and finally the collapse of the Pictish state, which was to be replaced by families forming themselves into clans for self protection.

Standing Stone at Straloch



Site of Ancient Pictish Mansion

The first recorded event in this period was in 729 when a battle took place between McFergus, King of the southern Picts and Drost, King of the northern Picts of Atholl, at Loch Broom — just beyond Glen Derby. King Drost was killed, the Atholl men defeated and thrown into Lochan Dhub — the Black Loch. This place has ever since had an evil reputation.

At this time, the Strath was called Strath-na-Muice Brice — the "Strath of the Brindle Sow". Indeed the whole strath abounded in wild pigs, and the hunting of wild boar was soon to become the sport of Kings. The name became altered to Strathardle after another famous battle in 903 between the Danes and the Atholl Picts. The Danes had been carrying out raids on the area for many years, burning, looting and destroying, and the Pictish King decided to put a stop to it.

Many centuries earlier, the first Pictish King 'Cruithne' had divided his kingdom into three Principalities, with each of his three sons becoming the Prince of one of them. The eldest son took the title 'Ard-Fhuil' (High or noble blood), which eventually became Ardle. The second title was Ath-Fhuil (next or second blood) and became Atholl. The third, Teth-Fhuil became Tummel.

So it was, in 903, that the job of routing the Danes fell to Prince Ardle. The highlanders lay in wait for the danes near Enochdhu (Black meadow or Black moor) and then charged and put them to flight. Ardle and two of his henchmen gave chase, but the Danes, seeing only the three of them, turned around and killed them. Prince Ardle and his henchmen were buried feet to feet, and the grave is still clearly visible at the foot of Dirnanean front drive. The grave is 16½ feet long and has a tall standing stone at one end and a boulder at the other. The Danes were buried in a mass grave at Enochdhu called 'Grey Hollow'.

CHAPTER III

It is now necessary to diversify a little and catch up with certain events in other parts of Scotland. The Pictish Kingdom of Atholl had remained almost a country in isolation. On the west coast, Christianity had been introduced by the first Celtic missionary, Saint Ninian. The son of a chief of the Scottish Picts, he was born in Galloway in 360, which was then still part of Roman Britain. He had gone to Rome on a pilgrimage, gone on to Tours, in France, where his native Gaelic was spoken, had been consecrated Bishop of St. Martin and sent home to spread the gospel. He is known to have stayed in this area, and had some success in converting a few people to Christianity; also in setting up churches, and church schools in the south and west.

Then, St. Patrick, who was the son of a Christian family, living on the Clyde, first started preaching Christianity in Dalriada, an Eastern area of what is now Ulster, but was then part of Scotia. A lot of people from that area were to settle in Argyll, and became known as the Dalriada Scots.

Then, St. Columba, who was born in Donegal, landed in Iona, and set up quite a strong Celtic church. There was, therefore quite an exchange of population between Ireland and the West of Scotland, with, all the time, a strong Christian influence spreading. Although this Gaelic culture remained on the west for some time, it began to move Eastwards, and by the end of the 8th Century Christianity was becoming important in Atholl, with some of the druids being converted. The pagan druid rites were, however, to remain dominant in these parts for several centuries.

In 806, Constantine McFerguson, the grandson of McFergus, the King of the southern Picts, founded Dunkeld as the seat of the primacy of the Scottish church, and endowed it with the barony of Cally, Ashmore and Persie, and this part of the Glen was to remain the property of the church right up to the reformation. The church took a strong hold. The name Bridge of Cally came from Caillach, a nun (although another translation is 'Place of the Hazel trees') and a nunnery and a monastery were set up there. Just to the south 'Rochallie' means 'Nuns Shieling', just to the north 'Lagan Dubh' is the Hollow of the Black nuns, and 'Black Craig' — the rock of the Black Nuns.

A little earlier, in the 5th and 6th centuries, St. Colin had founded a christian church at Moulin, and another further west at Logierait, before going to Fife to continue his ministry. Moulin market is called after him, and Moulin church is dedicated to him. Therefore, although the area was Pictish, and druid dominated, quite strong pockets of christianity came into being.

In the meantime, important changes were taking place on the political side. In 831, Alpin became king of the Scots, but as he was the grandson of Hungus, king of the Picts, laid claim to that kingdom also. The Picts preferred their own king Brude, and a battle followed at which Alpin was beheaded. The two kingdoms were finally united under Kenneth McAlpin (son of Alpin). His mother was the daughter of the Pictish King, and as maternal succession was recognised, both kingdoms claimed it as a victory. Gradually peace came about between the Picts and the Scots, and also, finally with the Norse men, although this was to take another 200 years. Finally, the Pictish kingdom came to an end, although its culture was to have a lasting effect in the area, and the strong differences between the Gaels of the West, and the Picts of the North and East are still quite apparent.

In 1005, King Malcolm's daughter married Crinan, the Abott of Dunkeld, and produced a line of kings. It was their son Duncan who was murdered by Macbeth. Crinan was made Abthane of Kirkmichael, and died fighting Macbeth, to get the throne for his grandson Malcolm, later to be known as 'Canmore'.

We return, then to the events of the Glen, and its association with Malcolm Canmore, and his English wife Queen Margaret, whose strong influence was to be felt for at least the next 400 years.

In 1033, the year that King Malcolm II died, there were terrible storms, with frost and heavy snow in the middle of summer. The floods caused by this made the lochs at the bottom of the glen burst their banks, and so the river Ardle was formed. As the water drained away, a thick growth of hawthorn took root and grew into an inpenetrable thorny thicket. The wild boar prospered in this, and the area became well known for its hunting. Indeed, wolves, too, were in abundance right up until 1747 when the last one was killed.

It was probably the wild boar that prompted Malcolm Canmore to build a royal hunting lodge, now known as Whitefield Castle, the ruins of which are still very much in evidence. This was probably around the 1060's, Malcolm having already built a hunting lodge in Braemar in 1059.

Malcolm Canmore had spent 14 years in England, and met Margaret, who was the sister of the Saxon heir to the throne. He was a fluent English speaker. From the start, Queen Margaret introduced English ways and English customs. In the Lothians, populated by Angles, which was already English speaking, she was surprisingly successful. The highlands were another matter altogether, and here it was fiercely resisted, creating an even bigger rift between highlands and lowlands.

Her real sphere of influence was with the church. We have already seen that the Celtic church was patchy, isolated and disorganised. Queen Margaret brought the full force of the Roman church to bear, introducing all its doctrines and practices. In 1072 Malcolm and Margaret founded the Abbey of Dunfermline, which was later to hold the churches of Strathardle and Moulin. In 1100 they founded the thaneship of Atholl into an Earldom. One of the Duke of Atholl's titles is still Earl of Strathardle. Strathardle was then a royal thaneage, and belonged to the king. Indeed, Macbeth was thane of Strathardle.

Thereafter, churches were built all over the country. The first church in Kirkmichael was built on the site of the present church when a charter was given by William 'The Lion' to Dunfermline Abbey, in 1184 for 'Church and lands of Kirkmichael'. Coupar Angus Abbey was founded in 1164, and Old Rattray church in 1170.

A charter was given to Dunfermline Abbey for the church and lands of Moulin in 1180, which was built on the site of an old Pictish fort when the chief became a Christian, while in 1178 the lands of Cally and Persie were given to the newly founded Coupar Angus Abbey. Sir Eustace Rattray gave the Drimmies to Coupar Abbey in 1292.

CHAPTER IV — THE 13th and 14th CENTURIES

As the 12th century came to an end, we find Strathardle a highly favoured area, much of it the property of the King, but a lot of it owned by the church. The old Pictish state had collapsed by 1150, although many customs and druid rites were to remain for a long time yet.

The church influence was good for the glen, and we learn from their records that the area had good grazings, well wooded slopes, lots of salmon, and husbandry well ahead of neighbouring area. All the timber beams for Coupar Abbey were supplied from the Glen. It is also thanks to the church that there are certain written records which we would not have otherwise had.

Over the next two hundred years, the glen was to thrive with ever improving husbandry of crops and livestock, and amazingly advanced technology, such as water powered mills.

There are many records of hunting by the Kings of Scotland during this period, when they would usually stay at Coupar Abbey for the purpose, as for instance, Alexander II in 1246, Robert the Bruce in 1317, King Robert in 1375, and King James VI in 1582. In 1564, Queen Mary attended such a hunt, and the bag is on record as being 360 deer and 5 wolves.

On the hunt in 1317, we are told that Robert the Bruce's favourite hound was chasing some evil beast on Pitcarmick when he disappeared down a hole, and his barks were heard to get fainter and fainter as he fell deeper and deeper. He was, of course, given up for lost, but amazingly was found a week or so later coming out of a cave at Craighall, weak, starved and bleeding, but nonetheless alive. That hole was finally filled in years later by McNab when his sheep kept disappearing down it.

Another reason for the standards and prosperity of the glen was its strategic location. When all towns, villages and roads have been removed from the map, it can be seen, as it was then, a natural collecting point and meeting place for all travellers, traders and cattle dealers. So it was later to become the first highland market place where markets were regularly held. This was established at Sillerburn, between Balnakilly and the Council houses, and sales were sealed by passing money (siller) over the burn, whence the name. This remained until 1669, when an alternative site was found at Dalnagairn.

Strict conventions were enforced on travellers, with somewhat drastic penalties, such as on one occasion in 1333 when travellers from Edinburgh, making for Ross-shire, stayed the night at Glenfernate without first asking permission. They awoke to find that all their horses tails had been cut off, and to this day it is still called "The Field of Tails". However, they subsequently got their own back at a later date, returning with an army of men and taking away a number of Glenfernate cattle.

There are also records during this time of some terrible weather conditions, as 1335, the year of famine and 1355 when the torrential rain carried away watermills, bridges, houses and cattle. Perhaps, in retrospect, 1985 should be added to the list!

1346 was the year of the terrible pestilence, which killed off a third of the population. But perhaps the most famous event of this period was the Raid of Angus in 1389. This arose from a dispute over the inheritance of Glenesk, in Angus, and resulted in a raid by the Robertsons, who by now had taken over the upper end of the glen, and Stewarts who were now the hereditary Earls of Atholl, on some of the Angus barons, notably the Ogilvies and Lindsays. During this raid, they invaded Glenesk, and Glenisla, killed many of the Ogilvies and Lindsays and took away the cattle. The Angus lairds rounded up other lairds and pursued the highlanders up the glen and a fierce battle was fought at Dalnacarn — the field of the cairns. The Robertsons and Stewarts, fighting only in their kilts, slaughtered many of the Angus barons, including Sir Walter Ogilvie, his brother and about a dozen other knights, although they were all dressed in armour. The rest of the Angus men fled, while the many that were killed were thrown into the Black Loch of the Dun, which is said to have been haunted by the ghosts of the Angus men ever since. The next place further down the glen is called Cluneskea, — 'The Haugh of the Battles' and also got its name from this terrible event.

This, then, was the beginning of the build up of the highland Clans, and all the feuds and battles which were to dominate history for the next 400 years.

As we come to the end of this period, we get a remarkable description of the glen from the records of Coupar Abbey dated 1403. It should be remembered that all the lower areas of the glen, up as far as Kindrogan ("then end of the thorns") were still covered with a dense and prickly undergrowth, so that only the higher areas were habitable or could be farmed. In spite of this, the account describes the glen as being "highly advanced, with an intelligent, thriving class of tenantry, a good knowledge of the breeding and rearing of cattle, rotation of crops, manuring, reclaiming and draining land, hedges, stone fences, trees and gardening". Tenants paid their rent in kind, while the sheep and cattle belonged to the abbot. Tenants provided kail, herbs, lettuce, onions, fruit trees and ash trees for bows and arrows. Ogilvie kept a malt kiln with meat and drink for the abbots and there were water powered corn mills, and mills for the pressing of cloth. Conditions of lease were strict and tenants could be evicted for infringement. One of these conditions required every tenant to keep a pair of wolfhounds, similar to those used at the battle of Mons Grampius 1100 years earlier, to kill wolves and other wild animals. Farm leases could, however, be retained by widows and children. People, clothes and countryside were described as "well above normal highland standards, and salmon were plentiful". It was even stipulated that servants could not be fed on salmon more than four days a week!

Such a description could not be applied to any other part of the highlands at any time during the next 400 years. Indeed, subsequent events in the glen were to somewhat tarnish this image.